

**Press Conference to Release Report of Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel
on Ocean Acidification
Great Hall of the Seattle Aquarium
Tuesday, November 27, 2012
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM, then individual media availability**

Thank you, Jay.

Congratulations, **Governor Gregoire**. Thank you for the invitation to join you today. Thanks to your leadership, we are seeing history in the making today.

And congratulations to you **Jay, Bill Ruckelshaus and every member of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Ocean Acidification**. Your talent and commitment are evident in the **pioneering, precedent-setting** report being released this morning.

Thanks, too, to the **Members of the Washington Congressional delegation and their staff who have provided support and devoted substantial energy to ocean acidification issues**.

I am grateful for the contributions of our **local, federal and university scientists, tribal nations, community groups and conservation organizations**. And for the range of support from the shellfish industry and the businesses driving the release of this landmark report.

When it comes to ocean acidification, we are still explorers. But we do know that, **while the issue has national and global significance, a local response is essential and can make a big difference**.

No where on our planet is a local response more urgently and immediately needed than **here in Washington**. Regional factors exacerbate the global changes in ocean chemistry and are already

affecting Puget Sound and Hood Canal. The pH levels in many of Washington's coastal waterways are much lower than those in the open ocean. This increased risk from local factors is one reason I am so pleased the report urges immediate action.

Informed, strong action is key to the success in the long-term economic, environmental and cultural value of the shellfish industry in this state, throughout the region, and to our nation.

The value of taking action is not new to the PNW. Pioneering, innovative and productive adaptation strategies have already emerged from collaborative studies in the region's oyster hatcheries, universities, and nearby NOAA labs.

Real-time, accurate monitoring of pH and other components of ocean chemistry in the hatcheries – *a remarkable accomplishment given the challenge of monitoring pH in seawater* – led to a clear understanding that pumping water into hatchery tanks only when waters are suitable for rapid growth significantly reduces the mortality of oyster larvae.

That breakthrough a few years ago was supported by Senator Maria Cantwells's timely efforts to buttress the Shellfish Industry and helped restore Pacific Northwest commercial oyster hatcheries. I understand these actions reaped about \$35 million for coastal communities in this state and Oregon, then, and the dollar figure is undoubtedly higher today.

Washington is fortunate to have strong elected representatives who understand the economic and health benefits of protecting the environment and who ground decisions in good science. In this context, I want to recognize, praise and thank Representative Norman Dicks for his long-standing, staunch support for NOAA for everything from monitoring ocean acidification conditions in Washington's coastal

waters to the conservation and recovery of Pacific salmon. Over his four decades in office, he has given a terrific boost to our efforts, and I am deeply grateful.

And congratulations to Governor-elect Jay Inslee on his election. On Capitol Hill, the Governor-elect has long been a highly valued go-to person on the issues of ocean acidification and alternative energy sources, and we look ahead to continue bridging shared and vital interests.

Encouraged by our successes, but cognizant of the immense challenges, we know we have much work to do. Concerns about the present-day impacts of ocean acidification on other marine organisms are being addressed more frequently in the scientific literature. Bill Ruckelshaus mentioned the newly released results showing that OA is causing the shells of tiny marine snails, called pteropods, to dissolve in corrosive waters. These pteropods are the primary food source for baby pink salmon and other economically important fish.

Serious concerns about ocean acidification stretch to the U.S. east coast, where we know less about ocean acidification. Sluggish coral growth is being studied in the Florida Keys and off the coast of Hawaii. British and American scientists are exploring impacts in the Arctic and Antarctic. In Alaska and New England researchers are examining anticipated impacts on important fisheries such as king crab and sea scallops.

Throughout this region and, increasingly, around the globe, there is growing urgency to not just understand what changing ocean chemistry means for lives, livelihoods and communities, but to get out front and manage the considerable and long-term risks of increased carbon

dioxide levels in our oceans. Both short-term and long-term strategies are needed to tackle this looming problem.

The painstakingly developed report being released by the Governor's office today offers a strategic path toward much-needed long-term solutions. I believe the report will serve as a beacon, underscoring for scientists and policymakers the breadth of considerations required to grapple with one of our planet's most serious, yet still widely under-recognized risks.

I look forward to continuing and strengthening the excellent level of cooperation between NOAA and our sister federal agencies, and with our many colleagues in Washington State's agencies, tribal nations and universities. And I am very proud of the groundbreaking work of our NOAA research teams at the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory and the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Science Centers.

Again, congratulations on your excellent work, and I wish you continued success.

Thank you.